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Multiple AA Aircraft Diverted to St. Croix Due to Strong Winds

Severe weather conditions force rerouting of American Airlines flights, impacting Caribbean travel plans

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Four American Airlines and one Spirit Airlines aircraft at the Henry E. Rohlsen Airport (HERA) on Thursday, March 28, 2024. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

Unexpected weather conditions led to significant disruptions in air traffic on Thursday, as strong winds forced several flights to be rerouted across the Caribbean. The Henry E. Rohlsen Airport (HERA) on St. Croix found itself unexpectedly hosting multiple unscheduled American Airlines flights, originally destined for other Caribbean locations.

According to Carlton Dowe, the Executive Director of the Virgin Islands Port Authority, the flights were diverted to St. Croix due to the adverse weather conditions. Meanwhile, some flights intended for St. Thomas were redirected to Puerto Rico because of the same wind-related issues. In St. Thomas, aircraft from American Airlines and Spirit were reported to be awaiting departure clearance, further indicating the widespread impact of the weather.

The disruptions included one flight that attempted to land in St. Thomas but was ultimately forced to reroute to Puerto Rico. Another flight made the decision to return to Miami, while an additional service from American Airlines was canceled outright. "St. Croix was used for other Caribbean island diversions," Mr. Dowe stated, highlighting the role of HERA in accommodating the unexpected influx of flights.

Despite the chaos caused by the strong winds, at least one Delta flight and another from Spirit successfully departed from St. Thomas on Thursday. Mr. Dowe described the day as "quite chaotic" but emphasized that safety remained the V.I. Port Authority's top priority amidst the challenges.

As of 5:12 p.m. on Friday, four American Airlines planes and one Spirit Airlines aircraft were confirmed to be at HERA. This incident comes on the heels of a previous disruption last Sunday when American Airlines canceled its 4:50 p.m. flight from St. Croix to Miami, citing inclement weather as the reason.

The series of flight diversions and cancellations underscore the impact of severe weather conditions on air travel in the region, with safety precautions taking precedence over scheduled itineraries.